

DAILY SCRIPTURE READINGS & MEDITATIONS YEAR A

By DON SCHWAGER

Source: <https://www.dailyscripture.net/>

SUNDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2023 – 25th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Scripture: **Matthew 20:1-16**

1 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. 2 After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place; 4 and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. 5 Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. 6 And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing; and he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' 7 They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.' 8 And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.' 9 And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. 10 Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. 11 And on receiving it they grumbled at the householder, 12 saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' 13 But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? 14 Take what belongs to you, and go; I choose to give to this last as I give to you. 15 Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?' 16 So the last will be first, and the first last."

Do You Begrudge My Generosity?

Meditation: What can work and wages, welfare and the unemployed tell us about the kingdom of God? In the parable of the laborers in the vineyard we see the extraordinary generosity and compassion of God (Matthew 20:1-16). There is great tragedy in unemployment, the loss of work, and the inability to earn enough to live and support oneself or one's family. In Jesus' times laborers had to wait each day in the marketplace until someone hired them for a day's job. No work that day usually

meant no food on the family table. The laborers who worked all day and received their payment complain that the master pays the late afternoon laborers the same wage. The master, undoubtedly, hired them in the late afternoon so they wouldn't go home payless and hungry.

God is generous and gives us work for his kingdom

God is generous in opening the doors of his kingdom to all who will enter, both those who have labored a life-time for him and those who come at the last hour. While the reward is the same, the motive for one's labor can make all the difference. Some work only for reward. They will only put in as much effort as they think they will get back. Others labor out of love and joy for the opportunity to work and to serve others. The Lord Jesus calls each one of us to serve God and his kingdom with joy and zeal and to serve our neighbor with a generous spirit as well.

Empowered to serve with a joyful and generous spirit

The Lord Jesus wants to fill each one of us with the power and strength of the Holy Spirit so we can bear great fruit for God's kingdom (the fruit of peace, joy, righteousness, and love) and also bring the fruit of his kingdom to our neighbor as well. We labor for the Lord to bring him praise, honor, and glory. And we labor for our neighbor for their welfare with the same spirit of loving-kindness and compassion which the Lord has shown to us.

Paul the Apostle reminds us, "Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not others, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward - you are serving the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:23-24). Do you perform your daily tasks and responsibilities with cheerfulness and diligence for the Lord's sake? And do you give generously to others, especially to those in need of your care and support?

Lord Jesus, fill me with your Holy Spirit that I may serve you joyfully and serve my neighbor willingly with a generous heart, not looking for how much I can get, but rather looking for how much I can give.

DAILY QUOTE FROM THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS

Christ our householder

Author unknown, from the 5th century A.D.

"The householder [in Matthew's parable - chapter 20] is Christ, to whom the heavens and the earth are like a single house; the family is as it were the multitude of creatures both angelic and earthly. It is as if he built a three-storied house: hell, heaven and earth, so that those struggling may live upon the earth, those conquered below the earth, those conquering in heaven. We too, set in the middle, should strive not to descend to those who are in hell but ascend to those who are in heaven. And in case perhaps you do not know which one you ought to shun or which one you ought to aspire to, he has given you as it were a little taste of both while you live between light and darkness: night as a taste of hell, daylight as a taste of heaven." (*excerpt from an incomplete Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, HOMILY 34*)